DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 244 508 FL 013 925

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TITLE An ESP Approach to EFL/ESL Teacher Training.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT ESP Journal; v2 p73-85 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Applied Linguistics; *Course Content; *Course Organization; *English (Second Language); *English for Special Purposes; *Language Teachers; Research Needs; Second Language Instruction; *Teacher Education; Teaching Methods; Textbook Content

ABSTRACT

The concentration of learner needs in programs of English for special purposes (ESP) has led to the neglect of teacher needs, particularly in the case of teacher training courses. A solution to the problem is to apply ESP principles to the design of teacher training courses for general English teachers. The language needs of teachers of English as a second language (ESL), both those required to complete the course successfully (course needs and study skills) and to operate in a full professional role (teaching needs and activities) must be considered. A multilevel model of course design is presented, each level moving from content through format and methodology to the language required to understand content. The syllabus can be adjusted to suit the conceptual and linguistic requirements of teachers in particular courses, while maintaining the subject-language link. The concept of ESP for teachers reveals the need for research into (1) the language difficulties experienced by teachers in English language teacher training courses, (2) the language of ESL teaching, and (3) the structure of both spoken and written academic English language teaching and applied linguistics texts. (MSE)

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The ESP Journal, Vol. 2, pp. 73–85, 1983
Pergamon Press Ltd. Printed in the USA.

0272-2380/83/010073-12$03.00/0
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# An ESP Approach to EFL/ESL Teacher Training

**Chris Kennedy**

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*Abstract*— The concentration on learner needs in ESP programmes has led to the neglect of teacher needs, particularly in the case of teacher-training courses. A solution to the problem is to apply ESP principles to the design of teacher-training courses for "general English" teachers. The language needs of EFL/ESL teachers, both those required to complete courses successfully (course needs/study skills) and to operate in a full professional role (teaching needs/activities) are described. By integrating training course content with teachers' language requirements we can develop ESP courses for teachers. A multilevel model of course design is presented, each level moving from content, through format and methodology, to the language required to understand content. The syllabus can be adjusted to suit the conceptual and linguistic requirements of teachers on particular courses, while maintaining the subject-language link at all times. The concept of ESP for teachers reveals the need for research into (a) the language difficulties experienced by teachers on English language-teaching training courses, (b) the language of EFL/ESL teaching, and (c) the structure of both spoken and written academic English language teaching and applied linguistics texts.

## Introduction

One of the major implications of "an ESP approach" to course design appears to be that the learners' needs and wants form a starting point for the eventual production of materials. The importance of needs analysis is a reflection of a general movement in education towards a more learner-centred curriculum, and as such is entirely justifiable, even if the theoretical foundations of many needs analysis models leave much to be desired (see D. Willis 1981 for a discussion of this point). However, in English language teaching (ELT), one of the more unfortunate results of this focus of attention on the learner has been that the needs and wants of the teacher have tended to be disregarded.

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## Areas of Neglect

We can see evidence of this neglect in three main areas of ESP activity. Firstly, the teacher variable has largely been ignored in the planning and design stages of materials projects. Materials are often produced by designers and writers only partially familiar with the environment in which they will be taught. This is the first stage of the problem; the second occurs when the materials are subsequently presented to teachers who not only may be inadequately trained or possess poor skills in English,

but who are now expected to cope with a radically different methodology if the course has been designed around learner-centred principles. These difficulties are compounded in the case of subject-specific ESP materials when the teacher has to bear the additional burden of teaching language through a subject content with which he may not be familiar.

The second area of neglect is the training of ESP teachers, partially a result of the higher priority and status given to materials design projects rather than teacher-training programmes. This priority would not be problematic if teachers could be included in some way as participants in the process of materials development but, as I have indicated above, this rarely occurs. Little thought has been given to the sort of training programme an ESP teacher requires, though Ewer's courses in Chile (Ewer 1976) and developments in a number of British universities are beginning to provide a variety of possible models (see Kennedy 1981 for an example). Although compartmentalisation of "ESP" and "non-ESP" teachers should generally be avoided, there are nevertheless certain issues arising from the ESP teacher's delicate position on the bridge between language and content which may need special treatment on ESP teacher-training courses. Bonamy and Moon (1981) illustrate ways of dealing with "common core" teaching problems and those particular linguistic and conceptual areas ESP teachers need to develop.

There is a third area of ESP work which has so far received little attention and it is this that I should like to discuss in the remainder of this paper. It is the desirability of considering the training of teachers (not "ESP" teachers, but "general English" teachers) as a type of ESP activity. Such an approach could have a salutary effect on the design of teacher-training programmes. How often, for example, do teacher trainers lecture on learner needs and wants to trainees while neglecting these principles in the design of the teacher-training course itself? Few attempts have been made to discuss design variables and their influence on the content of teacher-training courses (but see Strevens 1977 and Kennedy 1979). It is tempting, for instance, to focus on a new practice or methodology without considering its relationship to the teachers' present or future situations. This is a danger inherent particularly in courses for overseas teachers, provided generally by tertiary-level institutions in Britain and the USA. Unless there is room for modification of ideas in the light of feedback from the teachers on course, participants are likely to complain of lack of relevance, to misunderstand, or to feel that what they are doing in their "home" institutions is "wrong", even if it might be appropriate for local circumstances. Such dissatisfaction will probably have the same end results—depressed teacher performance during the training course and no change in teacher or pupil behaviour when the teacher returns to his work.

Factors which need to be considered in the design of teacher-training programmes include the status and use of English within the teacher's community, the variety of English acceptable in the classroom, (which might be an international, national, regional, or local variety), and whether

the teacher is working in an English-medium institution. (Both Smith 1981 and Pride 1982, while not directly concerned with teacher training, provide useful discussions on these issues.) The above factors relate to the teaching situation from which the teacher comes, to which he may be returning, or for which he is being prepared; other considerations concern the teacher himself—for example, whether he is a native or nonnative speaker of English, and if the latter, what his competence in English language is on joining the course and what level is expected to be achieved by the end of the course. There are also the questions whether the course provides initial, inservice, or postexperience training, and the administrative factors (common to all planning) of time, personnel, resources and finance.

## The Concept of ESP and Teacher Training

Crucial as these variables are, I would want to argue that what is of fundamental importance in the training of teachers is the role of *language* in that training. It is in this respect particularly that teacher-training course planning can benefit from an ESP approach. Let us look more closely at this concept. Essentially, ESP programmes should implement the answers to three closely related questions:

(a) what variety of (English) language does the learner require;
(b) what is the purpose for which the language is required;
(c) how specific is that purpose (and, hence, how specific is the language required).

These questions put language and learner purposes in acquiring language as a central component of syllabus design and provide a procedure similar to the Target Situation Analysis described by Chambers (1980). Now if we ask these same three questions substituting "teacher" for "learner" (i.e., "teacher as learner"), the answers should offer the foundation of a teacher-training course, the content of which would closely match teachers' needs, which I shall divide into "course needs" and "teaching needs".

### *Course Needs*

Let us examine the case of a teacher on a teacher-training course and offer a list of initial purposes for using English on the course. I have drawn a distinction between English-medium (EM) teacher-training institutions and non-English-medium (NEM) teacher-training institutions.

| Purposes for Using English | EM | NEM |
|---|---|---|
| listening to lectures | X | |
| library skills | X | X |
| reading journals and books | X | X |
| taking notes | X | |
| writing essays and examination answers | X | |
| contributing to seminars | X | |

The division between EM and NEM institutions is oversimplified and the situation represented above will vary considerably depending on local conditions and policy. In a NEM institution, for instance, while most activities may be carried out in the mother tongue, lecturing may still be conducted in English. There is also the likelihood that a department which trains English language teachers may adopt a language policy different from that of the institution as a whole, so there may, for example, be a departmental stipulation that essays should be written or seminars conducted in English. However, accepting the crude division, which is for purposes of illustration, we can see that especially in EM situations study skills will play a large part in determining a teacher's success or failure in the training programme. Study skills are of course a common feature of many ESP programmes; what is proposed is a study skills approach for teachers in training, involving a general aim (succeeding on the course) and a set of purposes (the skills required to achieve the general aim), and facilitating access to the particular variety of English language associated with the subject discipline, in this case the language of English language teaching (ELT) and applied linguistics.

The list of study skills required has been drawn up with the needs of nonnative speakers of English in mind, but certain elements might very well apply to native speakers, particularly those on postexperience courses who may be returning to an academic environment after some years' absence from full time study. Such a group might require a programme concentrating, say, on aspects of library skills and essay writing, focussing rather more on the acquisition and practice of the skill than the language required. Moreover, although a teacher's previous knowledge of the subject will determine just what subject-specific language has to be taught, it is likely that both nonnative and native speakers will experience difficulty with subject-specific lexis in the initial stages of the course. Nonnative speakers may require more assistance at this stage also with common-core lexical items, most of which would presumably be familiar to native speakers.

So we have now isolated a list of purposes (study skills) relating to a specific variety of language (the language of ELT and applied linguistics) which might form a part of a course for teachers in training. This aspect refers to course needs; I now wish to turn to a second aspect related to teaching needs.

*Teaching Needs*

Course needs refer to those academic skills the teacher has to develop in order to complete his course successfully; in this respect course needs are related to the teacher's role as a student or learner on an academic course. Teaching needs reflect the role of the course participant as teacher and predict the skills that the teacher will need *after* the course but in which he may need to be trained. The following is a sample list of activities that a language teacher might be expected to perform and which require

the use of specialist language and skills. The categories are broad and subjective and would need to be further analysed and subdivided for the purposes of syllabus design.

*Teaching Activities*

(a) selecting and evaluating material
(b) preparing lessons (with and without the use of teachers' notes)
(c) supplementing textbook exercises and designing own materials
(d) conducting a lesson
(e) setting and marking exercises, tests and examinations

Teaching activities refer to those tasks the teacher undertakes during a working day which involve the use of the target language (in this case, English) in some way. The list is not exhaustive nor will items be appropriate for all situations. Take, for example, activity (b)—preparing lessons using the teachers' book. This may not be a language problem if the teachers' book is written in the teacher's mother tongue. If, however, as is often the case, the notes are written in English and the teacher has poor reading skills, a language problem can present itself, which may be compounded if the conceptual content is also high (or the notes are badly written!). As an illustration, consider the following extract, chosen at random, from a recently published teachers' book, (*Skills for Learning* 1980). Even allowing for the fact that this is a fairly advanced course, presumably to be taught by teachers with a relatively good knowledge of English, the example illustrates the potential linguistic and conceptual difficulties teachers' notes can present to teachers. The extract is explaining the answer to a reading exercise:

> The students should conclude that the example of the Incas demonstrates that the main point of the first paragraph is not that inventions spread, but that in earlier times inventions spread very slowly (and in fact did not reach the Inca civilisation at all). The first two sentences therefore are in a concessive/contrastive relationship, even though this is not obvious. The second main point is obviously marked and should be easier to determine (p. 31).

A teacher not linguistically or conceptually well-prepared would react in a number of predictable ways, all counterproductive, to texts like the one above. He might attempt a laborious, time-consuming, and frustrating word-by-word approach; he might skip the explanation and go, in this case, straight for the answer contained in the key (and consequently not understand the reason behind the answer); he might decide to reject the teachers' book (and with it the methodology) and use his own tried and trusted methods.

The reader is probably aware at this point that in discussing activity (b) above, the divisions between the study skills arising from course needs, teaching activities arising from teaching needs, and subject content have become blurred. This integration of skills, activities, and subject content is inevitable, necessary, and highly advantageous when designing teacher-training courses and I shall return to this aspect later. For the moment I should like to repeat the original point: that for the successful performance

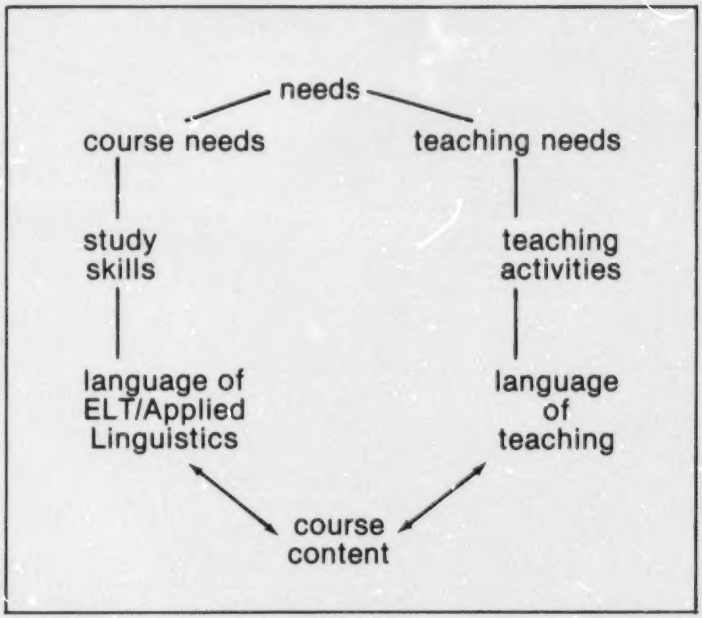


**Figure 1.**

of teaching activities, a sample of which I have listed, *language* is required and, further, a specific variety of that language.

Unfortunately, we have little idea of the language required to complete the teaching tasks listed above, in contrast to the amount we now know about the language of science and technology. The one exception to this "language gap" is research into teacher-pupil language which is related to activity (d), conducting the lesson. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) were among the first to describe the discourse structure of "classroom English" and further studies (for example, Allwright 1980, J. Willis 1981a, and Wachendorff forthcoming) have taken the language of the EFL/ESL classroom as their object of study. We are therefore much nearer being able to specify the teaching skills required in an EFL/ESL classroom and how they might be realised linguistically. To what extent such classroom language will need to be taught on a teacher-training course depends again on the teacher's present or future teaching situation. In some instances, it may be normal practice for much of the English lesson to be conducted in the mother tongue, not English. In this case, the focus of any language course (for teachers) might well be on "inner talk" (Sinclair and Brazil 1982) (those occasions the language itself is being taught through the use, for example, of teacher questioning and drilling), not on "outer talk", the language of management and socialising. However, the mother tongue is frequently used in the classroom not on theoretical grounds, but as the result of an understandable reaction by the teacher to what he feels is his own lack of competence in English. There is a strong argument in this

case for a language improvement programme that would boost a teacher's linguistic competence, but, by being linked to an "activities" programme, would also extend his pedagogic skills.

It might be thought that the teaching activities outlined earlier would be appropriate only for nonnative speakers. The situation is not as clear-cut as this, and native-speaker teachers, particularly those with little or no teaching experience, often need training in the language of the classroom, to take one example. The difference between the two groups is one of focus: native speakers have control over the language code but need to apply it in a novel situation and develop new teaching strategies, whereas the nonnative speaker may be both acquiring the new skill and the code to operate it. I shall return to this aspect in the next section. Figure 1 summarises the argument so far.

## The Role of Content

I have so far isolated two possible components of a teacher-training course, one related to study skills needed to complete the course, the other concerned with the actual language and strategies used by a teacher inside and outside the classroom. The next question to consider is how these two components can be linked to the actual content of the teacher-training programme.

The great advantage in this situation is that a number of problems normally inherent in ESP teaching are not present. There is for example not the usual division between language and content realised normally by the language teacher (teaching the language of the subject) and the subject teacher (teaching subject content) (Mohan 1979). In the case of a teacher-training course, the trainers have responsibility for both language and content. We can therefore achieve a degree of integration between the "E" (the language) and the "SP" (the acquisition of ELT content) not normally possible in ESP situations except through team-teaching arrangements (see Smyth 1980 and Dudley-Evans 1981).

Figure 2 illustrates one possible approach to the design of teacher-training courses which capitalises on this link between content and language and also takes account of the variables discussed above (see the last paragraph of "Areas of Neglect").

This process of course design is divided into five levels moving from Level 1 (the highest), which deals with course content, down to Level 5 (the lowest), which is concerned with the trainees' formal language skills. Within each level I have distinguished three elements: A, B, and C. Element A lists some of the variables that lead to decisions on course content, methodology, etc. (Element B), which in turn are expressed in materials design (Element C). To make this clearer, let me describe the levels in more detail.

*Level 1.* The starting point for the programme will be selection of content (B). The selection will be influenced both by the trainees' purpose in

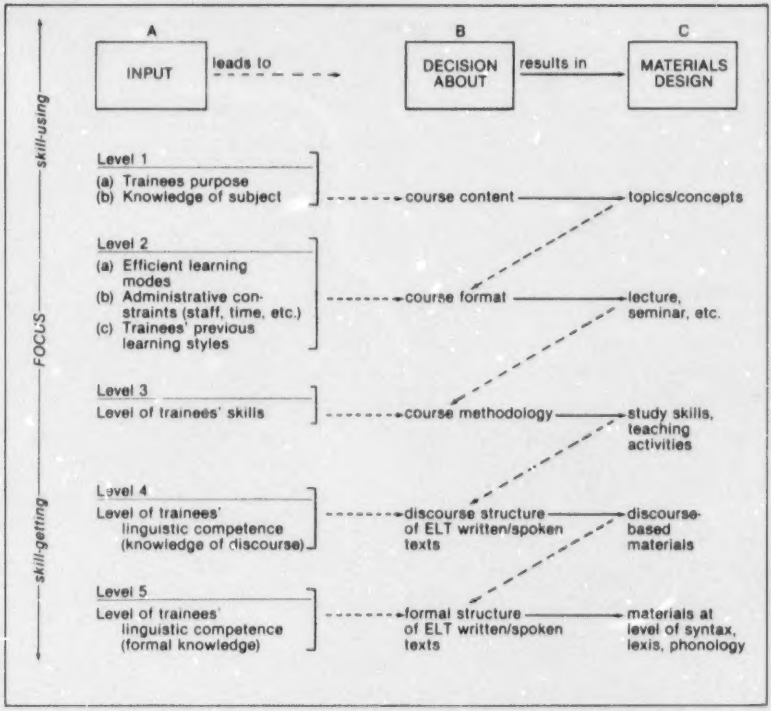


**Figure 2.**

coming on the course and by their previous knowledge of ELT, both theory and practice (A). The outcome (C) will be a content syllabus listing topics to be covered in the course and specifying the level at which they should be taught. Selection and grading of any course materials, then, will be made initially on conceptual rather than linguistic grounds.

*Level 2.* At this level, decisions will be made on the learning mode, that is, whether the content should be presented through lectures, seminars, tutorials, self-access materials, or an appropriate mixture of modes. Variables to be considered at this level include the trainees' previous learning experience, trainers' attitudes towards different modes and their efficacy, and practical constraints of time, number of trainers and trainees involved, and amount of content to be covered.

*Level 3.* Having decided on the different modes of instruction, we now have to consider the course methodology appropriate to those modes. For example, we might have decided at Levels 1 and 2 that part of the course would consist of a unit on, say, psycholinguistics to be taught through a series of lectures and seminars. We would then at Level 3 consider what preparation and followup each lecture/seminar would demand from the trainee and the methodology which would be adopted; for example,

whether a seminar would be led by trainer or trainee, whether there would be group work, whether it would consist of discussion of given information or problem solving. Following from this consideration of methodology we should arrive at a list of the study skills isolated earlier in this paper in the discussion of course needs. If we then compare the study skills required with the trainees' ability to operate these skills, we should be able to decide the level and form of support the trainees might require. This could either consist of simplification procedures (thus a lecturer might adopt repetition strategies, reduce his lecturing speed, check frequently for comprehension) or of support materials, such as handouts giving the main points or providing guided questions on a text.

*Level 4.* At Level 4 we are concerned with the linguistic competence required to operate the study skills listed at Level 3. The teaching content remains the same but is now combined with materials specifically designed to help the trainees comprehend the written and spoken texts they are exposed to in the course. It is important that such materials should not be a separate part of the course but should arise naturally from the decisions taken at Levels 1–3. Only in this way will the integration of content and language be preserved. Level 4 is concerned with language at the level of discourse. Thus, any support materials for this level will be designed explicitly to reveal units of written and spoken text above the level of the sentence.

*Level 5.* Some trainees may have problems encoding and decoding texts at and below sentence level. Level 5 materials would attempt to overcome such problems by concentrating on grammar, lexis and phonology. At this level, too, the language exercises would be part of Level 1 content, Level 2 format, and Level 3 methodology. At no stage in the process would the teaching of language be separated from the communication of content. Were this to occur, it would undermine the principles on which the approach is based.

Not all teacher-training programmes will need to proceed through the five levels. An advanced postexperience course for fluent native speakers might remain at Levels 1 and 2. Some native speakers might initially need some support at Level 3, however, (e.g., reference and essay-writing skills) but the focus would probably remain on the activity rather than the language (Level 4). Nonnative speakers of English with weaker command of the language might require help with the language needed to operate Level 3 skills effectively and would therefore need materials at Levels 4 and 5. At the lower levels the focus will be on skill-getting, learning the code necessary for success at the higher levels; the higher levels will focus on skill-using, providing practice in the skills necessary for handling content. (The terms "skill-getting" and "skill-using" are borrowed from Rivers and Temperley 1978.)

The advantages of this approach are several. Since the starting point of design is always Level 1, any subsequent language work is generated

by content, so that language practice is always purposeful and relevant. Any language materials will have a built-in authenticity since they will arise directly from decisions taken about course format and methodology at Levels 2 and 3. At the lower levels we are in effect teaching language skills through course content, but because the language work arises directly from the need to communicate and comprehend course content, trainees are less likely to react against language exercises and will instead regard them as preparation essential for success in their role as professional teachers.

The case for a close link, in this instance integration, between subject content, methodology, and language in ESP programmes has been made also by Phillips (1981) and Roe (1981), and a practical example provided by Reynolds (1981), but to my knowledge such an approach has not been developed for English language teacher-training courses. That such a programme is both feasible and advantageous I hope to have demonstrated, though the model illustrated in Figure 2 provides only a general outline of a planning process which would need to be expanded into a syllabus appropriate to specific situations. The profession has until recently been somewhat blinkered in respect of applicability of ESP approaches outside the established territory of tertiary-level science and technology and, to a lesser extent, social sciences (partially a natural result of demand), but just as we can begin to see a filtering of ESP theory and practice through to secondary level (Allen and Howard 1981, Wigzell forthcoming), so we may expect a broadening of ESP activity to include other content subjects and other areas, in this case ELT and teacher training. That teachers may need language improvement courses has been recognised for some time, especially in a case of oral skills development (Winck and Winter 1981). That they may need a specific variety of language and in addition training in aural, reading and writing skills is only just beginning to be realised, although Widdowson's collection of language texts (1971) recognised a need for specific study material. Laird (1977) has produced a language course for students of education, and more recently Frydenberg (1982) describes a reading skills course, also for education students, which tries to reflect topics the students are studying in their subject course. There is also increasing attention being paid to the language required by EFL/ESL teachers in the classroom. Johns (n.d.) and Blundell (1977) have produced materials to enable teachers to practice EFL/ESL classroom language and Hughes (1981) and J. Willis (1981b) have produced training handbooks. Both sorts of material (related to study skills and classroom language) may provide useful resources for teacher-training courses, but they should not be confused with the integrative approach to teacher training illustrated in Figure 2, which will demand "local" materials created in response to specific situations.

## Need for Research

A major constraint on implementation of ESP-influenced teacher-training programmes is the lack of basic research into both the language required

by teachers and the language of ELT and applied linguistics. We know little of the language problems particularly of nonnative speakers teaching English, or of the language difficulties faced by teachers and trainees on training courses when dealing with authentic spoken and written ELT texts in the form of lectures, seminars, books, and articles. To take the example of lexis, Seaton (1982) has produced a dictionary of ELT terms which should prove a useful resource, but there is no empirical research into the lexical difficulties teachers experience when reading ELT texts. No research, as far as I am aware, has been conducted into the structure of either spoken or written academic ELT text.

## Conclusion

This lack of research should not prevent us from trying to implement ESP courses for English language teachers, following the general principles described. The planning model (Figure 2) needs to be tested, evaluated and refined by both trainers and course participants. The results should be improved teacher-training programmes more closely identified with teachers' needs and an increased awareness of the necessity for research into the language of ELT which we can apply to the design of teacher-training materials.

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